



10 Nuttall Rd, Observatory, 7925

Cape Town, South Africa

info@masifundise.org.za

Tel: +27 21 6854549

NPO Number: 058-202 REG Number: IT159/2004

www.masifundise.org.za

Small-scale Fishers Welcome Linefish Appeal Outcome but Key Concerns Remain

For immediate release

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Masifundise and Coastal Links welcome the reinstatement of 297 boats to the small-scale fisheries sector, as announced during a press briefing by the Minister of Forestry, Fisheries and the Environment, Willem Aucamp, on the outcome of the 2026–2027 traditional linefish appeals. These vessels were previously removed from small-scale fishers under the latest TAE decision and have now been restored through the appeals process. While this reinstatement provides important relief, significant concerns remain for the sector.

This development follows sustained and collective action by small-scale fishers and supporting organisations, initiated by Coastal Links, to draw urgent national attention to the Department's earlier decision to reduce the Total Allowable Effort (TAE) for the small-scale fisheries (SSF) sector. That initial decision placed the livelihoods, food security and well-being of fishers, their families and entire coastal communities at serious risk.

Over the past month, the SSF sector mobilised extensively, uniting cooperatives and community leaders across provinces, drafting and submitting a [Letter of Demand](#), presenting to the [DFFE Portfolio Committee](#), and organising local protest actions to highlight the severe socio-economic consequences of the allocation cuts. This outcome demonstrates the power of collective action and the determination of fishing communities to defend their rights and livelihoods.

While we acknowledge the Minister's engagement and the partial relief provided, several critical concerns remain:

- Many of the traditional linefish appeals called for a broader revision of the overall TAE, yet the Minister did not indicate whether a full review will be undertaken, including consideration of allocations across other sectors such as the recreational sector.
- The briefing did not clearly outline how the Department will address the TAE allocations for the Eastern Cape and KwaZulu-Natal, where current vessel allocations (18 vessels) across both provinces remain deeply inadequate.
- The Minister indicated that "the data that I've got showed me that in certain species, the numbers of fish have actually increased. And that there was absolutely no reason to take away those fishing quotas." yet no acknowledgement or apology was offered to the SSF sector for the uncertainty and hardship caused.

- Although we welcome the Minister's intervention, this response comes after months of unanswered correspondence from fishers, their legal representatives and supporting organisations. It should not have required a formal appeal process for the Department to meaningfully engage.
- The longstanding pattern of marginalisation and disregard of the SSF sector by the Department remains unaddressed.

It is also regrettable that fisher representatives invited to the Cape Town briefing were selected by the department **without extending an invitation to Coastal Links**, the only national fisher organisation active across all four coastal provinces. This omission is concerning given Coastal Links' historic role in advancing small-scale fishers' rights, coordinating national responses, and elevating this matter to the highest levels of public and parliamentary attention.

We urge the Department to institutionalise meaningful, transparent and sustained engagement with legitimate and representative fisher structures in all decision-making processes. Fishing communities are diverse and complex, and policy decisions affecting them must be inclusive, equitable and grounded in both social justice and sustainability.

Masifundise and Coastal Links remain committed to constructive engagement that safeguards marine resources while protecting the constitutional rights, dignity and livelihoods of small-scale fishing communities.

For media enquiries, please contact:

Andre Cloete (Coastal Links Western Cape Chairperson)
071 545 2268

Yvette le Fleur (Project Officer for Western Cape and Northern Cape):
0781630084
yvette@masifundise.org.za

Jordan Volmink (Project Co-ordinator WC and NC):
079 145 5281 (WhatsApp)
jordan@masifundise.org.za

Carmen Mannarino (Programme Manager):
071 283 3179 (WhatsApp)
carmen@masifundise.org.za

Nobathembu Ndzengu (Media Officer)
078 593 4230
nobathembu@masifundise.org.za